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3/9/89

Harold:

What do you think about this letter? Do you agree or disagree with it in principle?

Februa



Dear Journalist:

A file accumulated on AIDS related material order has been sent under separate cover to you. -- ----- journalist, responsible and truly interested in making the crucial connections to help create an informed public opinion that could stimulate defensive action, would write and publish.

Like a lung cancer patient dragging on a cigarette, the "terminal" press seems to be dying of the things it did not want to know too well. Nobody asked journalists to become journalists. News writers could have chosen fiction or comedy writing. But having made the choice one cannot go blithely forward under the misapprehension that dismal performances are not being observed by anyone more critical than the editors of the Columbia Journalism Review.

Is it because of a combination of vital lies, compliant behavior, bribery and fear that today's editors turn to subterfuge and displacement exercises instead of reporting the hard stories? Why is it that even the semi-hard stories are told so softly, obtusely and even then, in an untimely, tardy manner. And then, why aren't the connections made and the extrapolations drawn?

Five years ago the book "Naming Names" arrived to much favorable critical attention. It analyzed and dissected the mores and motives of a small group of entertainment industry employees, who, because of their proscribed political activities, were subjected to a modern inquisitional process. This was a big book about little people. The scope was limited to how and why those insignificant (insofar as world events are concerned) men and women acted under duress.

The scene of the action was "set" in the so-called "McCarthy Era", a legendary time of gross civil rights violations. The book furthered the popular misconception that those days are as divorced from today's climate of justice and light as 15th Century Spain.

For a journalist, not "naming names" in all its guises such as omission, obfuscation, verbosity, snobbery, mis- and disinformation, is a far, far more serious offense than "naming names" is for an actor. The actor who is manipulated into "naming names" may or may not be reprehensible, but the journalist who avoids his duty to report is the most perfidious of all players in the tragedy of our time.

In an age of control by behavior modification on a mass-media scale, it is the pseudo-journalist who fills the archetypal Judas goat role. What we are fatally missing today in the United States are real journalists like Garrison, Steffens and Seldes. The salt has lost its savor.

If you insist on fulfilling the vital mission of a journalist with a berth on an institution as trusted as the publication you have associated yourself with, must you not be prepared to cover the hard stories, whatever the consequences or make room for stouter hearts? Is not journalism a serious business?

Have not men been righteously shot for desertion and flogged for drowsing on watch? Then what of the journalist who proudly flaunts that honorable badge but betrays its accompanying implicit trust. Is this not more akin to treachery?

The probability that HTLV-III is the genetically engineered creation of our military-science-industrial society is only one of many neglected news stories and reflects the continuing high level of collusion in the "vital lies" now short circuiting our information process.

*Jud Aron*